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## Christian communication and its impact on Korean society : past, present and future

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# **Christian Communication and Its Impact on Korean Society: Past, Present and Future**

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy  
University of Wollongong**

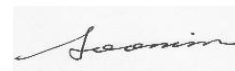
**Soon Nim Lee**

**Faculty of Creative Arts  
School of Journalism & Creative writing**

**October 2009**

## **CERTIFICATION**

I, Soon Nim, Lee, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Creative Arts and Writings (School of Journalism), University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Soon Nim, Lee', is displayed on a light gray rectangular background.

**Soon Nim, Lee**

**18 March 2009.**

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## Abstract

**Background:** Although it is historically acknowledged that the Republic of Korea (South) has become a modern democratic republic, very little has been written or researched about the processes that were involved in achieving this state and the role of Christian Communication in national development. Traditionally, for many centuries, Korea was a feudal kingdom, known as the ‘Hermit Kingdom’. How then, did the country move in a short space of time from this kingdom to the republic of today? What were the most influential factors?

**Aims:** The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that Christian Communication has been, and continues to be a major influence in the social and national development of modern Korea.

**Methods and procedures:** First, to research the development of Christian Communication in the nation since the time of the last kingdom to the present time, an examination of historical documents and records were conducted. Secondly, the lives of national leaders were examined and national identities were interviewed for their assessments of the impact of Christian Communication on the character of the nation. Thirdly, the thesis explains the ongoing development of modern methods of Christian Communication and the continuous impact that they have on the nation.

**Outcome and results:** Looking at the overall period from the 19th century to 2008, it is clear that Christian Communication has been one of the most important factors in the development of the character and society of South Korea.

The initial decision of the early missionaries in the 1880s to use the old, common, but neglected *Hangeul* language was probably the most important decision in the life of any nation in the last 150 years. Without the widespread use of this language and the consequent publishing of books and newspapers, Korea would still have been locked in the restrictive use of a Chinese script and traditional governmental methods.

The general population would have been denied the possibility of national

communication across all levels of society. The people of Korea would not have been equipped to survive as a culture, under the Japanese occupation and, later, the catastrophic Korean War.

**Conclusion:** Christian Communication, especially publishing in all its forms, has had a major impact on the character of the democratic life of the nation as seen in the rediscovery of *Hangul*, as the modern language of communication and the development of various communications media pioneered by the early Christian leaders within Korea.

This impact continues today through the use of the electronic as well as the more traditional methods of publishing.

Without the dynamic Christian Communication in its many forms, Korea would not be the nation that it is today. Its prosperity and its educational and social institutions would not have developed as rapidly and dramatically as it can be seen in most areas of national life.

**Keywords:** Christian communication, *Hangul*, publishing, newspapers, Japanese occupation, Christian political participation, radio, television, internet, leaders, missionaries.

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Many colleagues in Korea have given me their advice, access to information and the use of their files and historical records. I thank God for their friendship and help. I apologize if I do not mention each of you by name.

My aim in submitting this thesis is to make available information about the role that Christian Communication has played in Korea over the last 150 years. This would not have been possible without the help which I have received especially from my Korean friends.

I hope that by making a contribution to the field of Christian Communication in Korea, I will be able to repay all these influential and helpful people in some small ways.

Humbly submitted  
Soonim Lee, 2008